

VLR-8/21/90 NRHP-2/1/91

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Boundary Markers of the original District of Columbia

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Establishment of the Original Boundaries of the District of Columbia

C. Geographical Data

The boundary markers of the original District of Columbia located in the Commonwealth of Virginia are within the jurisdictions of the counties of Arlington and Fairfax and the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church. They are spaced at more or less regular intervals of one mile along a line drawn between the UTM coördinates 18|322760|4295280 and 18|311570|4306900 and between the UTM coördinates 18|311570|4306900 and 18|315080|4310370.

See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation

Hugh C. Miller  
Signature of certifying official

17 Dec 1990  
Date

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Baker, Marcus. "The Boundary Monuments of the District of Columbia." Records of the Columbia Historical Society. Vol. 1 (1897): 215-224.

Chase, Louise Coflin. "Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia." Manuscript on file, Washingtonian Collection, District of Columbia Public Library. (1930).

Columbia Historical Society. "The Writings of George Washington Relating to the National Capital." Records of the Columbia Historical Society. Vol. 17 (1914): 4-7.

Lawrence, Kenneth D. "Letter from Kenneth D. Lawrence to Mr. Stuntz." Manuscript on file, Virginia Collection Files, Fairfax County Public Library. 1967.

National Capital Planning Commission. Boundary Markers of the Nation's Capital. (1976).

Nye, Edwin Darby. "Boundary Stones." The Washington Star Sunday Magazine. (June 23, 1963).

Nye, Edwin Darby. "Revisiting Washington's Forty Boundary Stones, 1972." Records of the Columbia Historical Society. Vol. 48 (1973): 740-751.

Proctor, John Clagett. "Proctor's Washington and Environs." (1949).

Robinson, June. "The Arlington Boundary Stones." Arlington Historical Magazine. (October 1989): 5-19.

Shuster, Ernest A., Jr. "The Original Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia." The National Geographic Magazine, Vol. XX (April 1909): 356-359.

Statutes at Large and Treaties of the United States of America From December 1, 1845 to March 3, 1851. Vol. IX (1862): 35-37.

Terman, Mark J. "The 'Jurisdiction Stones' and Cornerstone Park." Manuscript on file in Virginia Collection, Falls Church Public Library. (1972).

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Waters, Frances W. and Lt. Col. Robert P. The Boundary Stones. Manuscript on file, Thomas Nelson Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Arlington, Virginia. (1963).

Woodward, Fred E. "A Ramble Along The Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia with A Camera." Records of the Columbia Historical Society. Vol. 10 (1907): 63-87.

Woodward, Fred. E. "With A Camera Over The Old District Boundary Lines." Records of the Columbia Historical Society. Vol. 11 (1908): 1-15.

## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ORIGINAL BOUNDARIES OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

In the summer of 1787, the framers of the United States Constitution confronted a long list of issues, ideas, problems, and solutions concerning the new government.

One such issue was the location of the capital of the new United States. To deal with this problem, the framers wrote the following in Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution:

"The Congress shall have Power . . . To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square {a square of ten miles to a side, or a hundred square miles }) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States.

Many sites had been proposed as the new capital city even before the first Congress began its deliberations. Congress passed the Residence Act and it was signed into law by President George Washington on 15 July 1790. When the act was signed, Virginia and Maryland had already passed laws ceding land to the new government. The actual area approved in the act was more than the ten mile square allowed in the Constitution. The passage of the act was possible due to a compromise on the issue of the capital and the separate but important issue of the assumption of the states' war debts by the federal government.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Act, President George Washington had the final decision on location of the exact ten mile square within the area designated as well as the three commissioners who were to supervise the survey of the site.<sup>2</sup>

On 22 January 1791 Washington appointed Thomas Johnson and Daniel Carroll of Maryland and David Stuart of Virginia as "commissioners for surveying the District of Territory accepted by the said act".

## F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Boundary Markers of the original District of Columbia

II. Description

### SUMMARY

This Multiple Property Documentation Form is for the twelve boundary stones now located in Virginia that marked the original District of Columbia boundary. Andrew Ellicott, assisted by Benjamin Banneker, surveyed the boundary in 1791. The first stone was placed at Jones Point on 15 April 1791. The year the stone was placed is engraved on the stone; in the case of the Virginia stones, the date on each stone is 1791. A total of forty stones

III. Significance

The boundary markers of the original District of Columbia are of national importance.

As a group, these stone markers are the enduring physical evidence of the establishment of the permanent seat of government of the United States in one of the first comprehensively planned cities of modern times. They are also directly associated with two figures of national importance, Andrew Ellicott, the principal surveyor of the entire capital city and other important boundaries and cities, and Benjamin Banneker, a gifted free black astronomer and mathematician who collaborated with Ellicott in the survey of the capital's boundaries. The markers are also the first monuments erected by the United States.

IV. Registration Requirements

Each Boundary Marker must be intact, its location known and marked, and if moved, preserved in a nearby location. If not the original marker, its replacement must be at least fifty years old.

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet for additional property types

**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

It is anticipated that the multiple property listing for the Boundary Markers of the original District of Columbia, 1791, will eventually include nominations for each of the boundary stones located in Virginia which mark the boundary of the original District of Columbia. The south cornerstone and the Southwest #9 Marker are already on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic context was determined based on the legislation underlying the choice of the site of the new federal capital, which also called for the placement of the stones in Virginia. The requirements for integrity for the listing of the related properties were derived from the National Capital Planning Commission booklet, 1976, and based upon field work and documented research.

See continuation sheet

**H. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Form Prepared By**

name/title Barbara A. Hynak, Chairman, District V Boundary Markers Committee  
organization Virginia Daughters of the American \* date July 9, 1990 \* Revolution  
street & number 812 S. Courthouse Road telephone (703) 553-0065  
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Two days later, President Washington issued a proclamation establishing the beginning point of the boundary lines "Running from the Court-House of Alexandria in Virginia, due South West half a Mile, and thence a due South East course". The President went on to state "I do hereby declare and make known, That all that part within the said four Lines of Experiment which shall be within the State of Maryland and above the Eastern Branch, and all that Part within the same four Lines of Experiment which shall be within the Commonwealth of Virginia . . . is now fixed upon, and directed to be surveyed, defined, limited and located for a Part of the said District accepted by the said Act of Congress for the permanent Seat of the Government of the United States".<sup>3</sup>

Washington's choice of the land necessitated an amendment to the Residence Act, as the southern part of the area chosen was not part of the land described in the act.<sup>4</sup> Washington's square included the port of Alexandria as well as its wharfs. The southern boundary was only four miles from Mount Vernon.

Major Pierre L'Enfant was chosen to lay out the proposed city,<sup>5</sup> while Major Andrew Ellicott was assigned to survey its boundaries.<sup>5</sup>

Ellicott, born in 1754, was a professional surveyor and a member of the American Philosophical Society and owned what have been described as the finest surveying instruments in the United States at that time. These instruments are now housed in the National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution.<sup>6</sup>

He had been completing important surveys since the revolutionary war, including the survey of the boundary between Virginia and Pennsylvania begun by Mason and Dixon. He was also responsible for the survey of the west boundary of Pennsylvania, from the Ohio River to Lake Erie, a line that stands today.<sup>7</sup>

In 1788 Ellicott, with his younger brothers, surveyed the western portions of the New York/Pennsylvania boundary; this survey included the first accurate measurement of the entire length of the Niagara River and its falls.<sup>8</sup>

He was a mathematics professor at West Point from 1812 until his death in 1820, and is buried at West Point.

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Ellicott had often used his brothers in his survey work, but they were unable to help him survey the federal boundary due to other commitments. He needed an assistant to make the astronomical observations. A cousin suggested Ellicott contact his neighbor, Benjamin Banneker. Banneker was a free black who had a lifelong interest in mathematics who had taught himself the principles of astronomy. Ellicott retained Banneker to make the astronomical observations and the necessary calculations to establish the location of the south cornerstone. Ellicott and the field crews did the actual surveying. Banneker worked on the survey from February to April 1791, when ill health forced him to return home. He was more than sixty at the time.<sup>9</sup>

Ellicott was in Alexandria by early February; the survey started on February 12. The procedure for laying out the square was a simple one. Before undertaking to define the square, Ellicott traced a meridian at Jones Point on the west side of the Potomac River, laid off an angle of 45 degrees from this meridian to the northwest, and continued in a straight line in that direction for ten miles.<sup>10</sup> On February 23, the Alexandria Gazette stated that Ellicott had finished the first line of this survey of the federal territory in Virginia and had crossed, below Little Falls, the river on the second line. He made a right angle at the end of that line with a straight line which he carried off in a northeasterly direction, also for ten miles. He made a right angle at the end of the second line and carried it off straight for another ten miles to the southeast. Finally he carried a line from the terminus at Jones Point to meet the end of the third line. The lines were measured by means of a chain, examining and correcting them each day to be sure there were no changes affecting its accuracy. It was plumbed wherever there was uneven ground and it was traced with his transit and equal altitude instruments.<sup>11</sup>

In March Ellicott moved his quarters and his office to Georgetown due to the survey's progress. L'Enfant joined Ellicott there. L'Enfant was continuing to map out the plan of the Federal City. Fearing profiteering land speculators, L'Enfant would not allow anyone to see the plan. Ordered by the commissioners to reveal the plan, he instead left the United States, taking all copies of his plan of the District of Columbia with him. Banneker reproduced it from memory in minute detail, thereby allowing the work to continue.<sup>12</sup>

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In late March, President Washington met with local landowners and examined Ellicott's survey and L'Enfant's plan. He commended Ellicott for his work.<sup>13</sup>

When Ellicott had completed the survey to the extent that the south corner was determined, the south cornerstone was ceremoniously laid at Jones Point on 15 April 1791. The survey work continued, as did the laying out of the streets in L'Enfant's plan.

The laying of the cornerstone was a great event. On Friday, 15 April 1791 Daniel Carroll and Dr. David Stuart, two of the three Commissioners appointed by Washington, arrived in Alexandria. The mayor, town officials, and the ordinary people walked from Wise's Tavern in Alexandria to Jones Point. The master of the Masonic Lodge and Dr. Stuart, assisted by other masonic brothers, placed the stone pursuant to Ellicott's directions based on Banneker's calculations; after which a deposit of corn, wine,<sup>14</sup> and oil were placed upon it and remarks made by Rev. James Muir.<sup>14</sup>

The survey crew cleared twenty feet on either side of each marker along the survey line. The fourteen stones on the Virginia side of the Potomac River were placed that first year, in 1791. Markers were not always placed exactly at mile distances, if in doing so, the marker would be in a stream or otherwise on unstable ground. The four sides were inscribed as follows: On one side, the word "Virginia"; on the opposite side, the words "Jurisdiction of the United States"; on the third side, the distance in miles and poles (if the marker was not at exactly one mile away from the other marker), and on the fourth side, the magnetic compass reading.<sup>15</sup>

The stones on the east side of the Potomac River, separating Maryland from the new federal city, were placed in 1792.

When surveyed in 1879 by the Coast and Geodetic Survey, the square was found to not be an exact ten mile square. Each line was found to be more than ten miles long but not of equal length.<sup>16</sup>

In 1846 the U.S. government retroceded to the State of Virginia that portion of the original District of Columbia lying on the Virginia side of the Potomac.<sup>17</sup> The stones thus ceased to serve as the boundary between the federal territory and Virginia. They were

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used, however, to establish the boundaries of Alexandria County, (now Alexandria city), Falls Church city, and Fairfax County, including present Arlington County, and thus defined, and continue to define, the boundaries between the Northern Virginia local jurisdictions.

Recognizing the historical value of the stones, observers have been calling for their preservation and protection since the 1890s. One of the important early efforts was that of Fred E. Woodward, brother of the founder of Woodward and Lothrop Department Stores, who read a paper on the stones before the Columbia Historical Society in 1907.<sup>18</sup> He persisted in his efforts and in late 1914 addressed a committee of the District of Columbia Daughters of the American Revolution regarding the stones and his efforts to preserve them.

On April 7, 1915, the committee passed a resolution that Mrs. George P. Conway, Chairman, presented at State Conference: "That the D.C. DAR take up for part of their patriotic work for the year the preservation and protection of the old boundary stones on which are recorded the oldest records of the District, by placing an iron fence around each stone, to be done by Chapter or individually." The recommendation was endorsed by the State Regent and adopted by the District of Columbia Daughters. Sponsoring District of Columbia, Virginia, or Maryland DAR Chapters paid the sum of \$1 for permission to erect the fences around the milestone. Deeds, in the following form, were made to the committee by the various landowners:

At the request of your representative, Mrs. Geo. P. Conway, Chairman, and Mrs. Velma Sylvester Barber, Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer, of your said Committee, I, the Undersigned, for and in consideration of One Dollar in hand paid: DO HEREBY GIVE AND GRANT to your said Committee permission to erect on my land surrounding the Boundary Mile-Stone Marked \_\_\_\_\_ 'Jurisdiction of the United States,' which is located on \_\_\_\_\_ Avenue, a suitable iron fence for the preservation of said Monument, the area of said grant not to exceed one yard square of

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ground of which the said mile-stone is the center; the same to be placed under the special care of \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter, D.A.R., \_\_\_\_\_ is now the Regent. Witness my Hand and Seal the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ A.D.<sup>19</sup>

Gichener Iron Works installed the iron fences measuring about three feet square by five feet high, with the corner posts set in cement, at a cost of \$18 each. The cornerstone fence was much larger, (five feet in diameter), the cost being \$43. A bronze Daughters of the American Revolution marker was placed on each fence with the stewardship chapter's name.<sup>20</sup>

As the Washington metropolitan area has changed, so has DAR stewardship responsibilities for the stones. New chapters have been formed and old ones merged or disbanded. Some stones have had changes in their steward chapter, while some have been under the stewardship care of the same chapter for more than seventy-five years.

While the elements have continued to erode the stones, the stones remain in surprisingly good condition since the surveys done in the 1890s and early 1900s. Although at least one stone has been broken in recent years (but repaired due to the diligence of the DAR), no other stone has been lost or further damaged since the DAR fences were placed around the stones. The fences make the stones noticeable, and even if people do not understand their significance, they seem to have understood that they should be preserved. The fences also make the stones less likely to be indiscriminately plowed over or bulldozed under.

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ENDNOTES

1. June Robinson, "The Arlington Boundary Stones," Arlington Historical Magazine, (October 1989): 5-7.
2. Ibid. P. 7.
3. Columbia Historical Society, "The Writings of George Washington Relating to the National Capital," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 17 (1914): 3-6.
4. Robinson, P. 7.
5. Robinson, P. 7.
6. National Capital Planning Commission, Boundary Markers of the Nation's Capital, (1976): 7.
7. Robinson, P. 8.
8. National Capital Planning Commission, P. 7.
9. Ibid. Pp. 7-8.
10. Ibid. P. 8.
11. Robinson, P. 14.
12. Nye, Edwin Darby, "Boundary Stones," The Washington Star Sunday Magazine, (June 23, 1963): 7.

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13. Robinson, P. 14.

14. John Clagett Proctor, Proctor's Washington and Environs, (1949): 102-103.

15. Robinson, P. 16.

16. Edwin Darby Nye, "Revisiting Washington's Forty Boundary Stones, 1972," Columbia Historical Society Records, vol. 48 (1973): 741.

17. Statutes at Large and Treaties of the United States of America From December 1, 1845 to March 3, 1851, Vol. IX (1862): 35-37.

18. Fred E. Woodward, "A Ramble Along the Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia with A Camera," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 10 (1907): 63.

19. National Capital Planning Commission, P. 37

20. Ibid, P. 37-38.

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were placed to mark the ten-mile square boundary. Fourteen stones are in Virginia, twenty-six share the border between the District of Columbia and Maryland.

All of the forty stones were in place by 1 January 1793, when Ellicott certified that:

These lines are opened, and cleared forty feet wide, that is twenty feet on each side of the lines limiting the territory; And in order to perpetuate the work, I have set up square mile stones, marked progressively with the number of miles from the beginning on Jones' Point, to the west corner . . . thence to the place of beginning on Jones' Point; except in a few cases where the miles terminated on declivities, or in waters; . . . On the sides of the stones facing the Territory is inscribed, 'Jurisdiction of the United States.' On the opposite sides of those placed in the Commonwealth of Virginia, is inscribed 'Virginia,' and on those in the state of Maryland, is inscribed 'Maryland.' On the third and fourth sides, or faces, is inscribed the Year in which the stone was set up, and the variation of the Magnetic Needle at that place.<sup>1</sup>

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The markers were sawed from sandstone, from the Aquia Creek quarries near Stafford, Virginia, which were leased by the U.S. Government. The intermediate markers were one foot square, two feet in height above the ground and two feet below the ground. The cornerstones were three feet in height. Above ground, they were sawed, not cut with a chisel; below ground they were rough

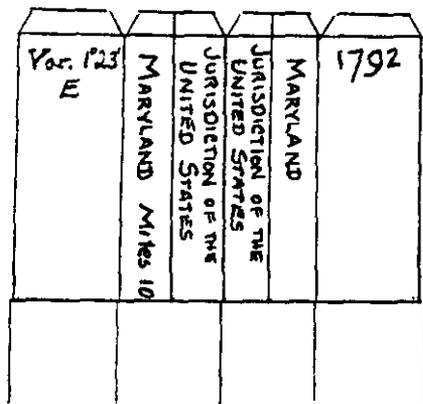
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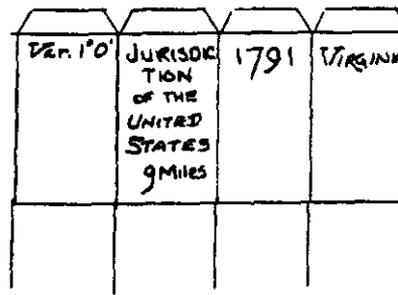
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cut. The top was bevelled for four inches, forming a frustrum of a four-sided pyramid.<sup>2</sup> The same stone was used in the old part of the Capitol and the middle part of the White House.<sup>3</sup>

The carvings on the stones appear to be done by the same stone carver, with the exception of the Southwest #1 stone.<sup>4</sup> The original engravings were as follows<sup>5</sup>:



North Cornerstone



Typical Intermediate Stone

Two hundred years of weather, pollution, and the urbanization of the area has had its effect on the markers. Even after retrocession of the land back to Virginia, the stones remained. The twenty-foot clearing on either side of the boundary markers grew back to forest. Urbanization of the area followed. Some of the stones are in good condition; some have been moved to make way for roads and buildings; some have been reduced to stumps, and one has been lost for approximately a hundred years.

The fourteen boundary stones in Virginia are in varying states of preservation. Considering the passage of two hundred years and the stones relative obscurity for much of that time, it is nothing short of remarkable that any of the original markers remain at all.

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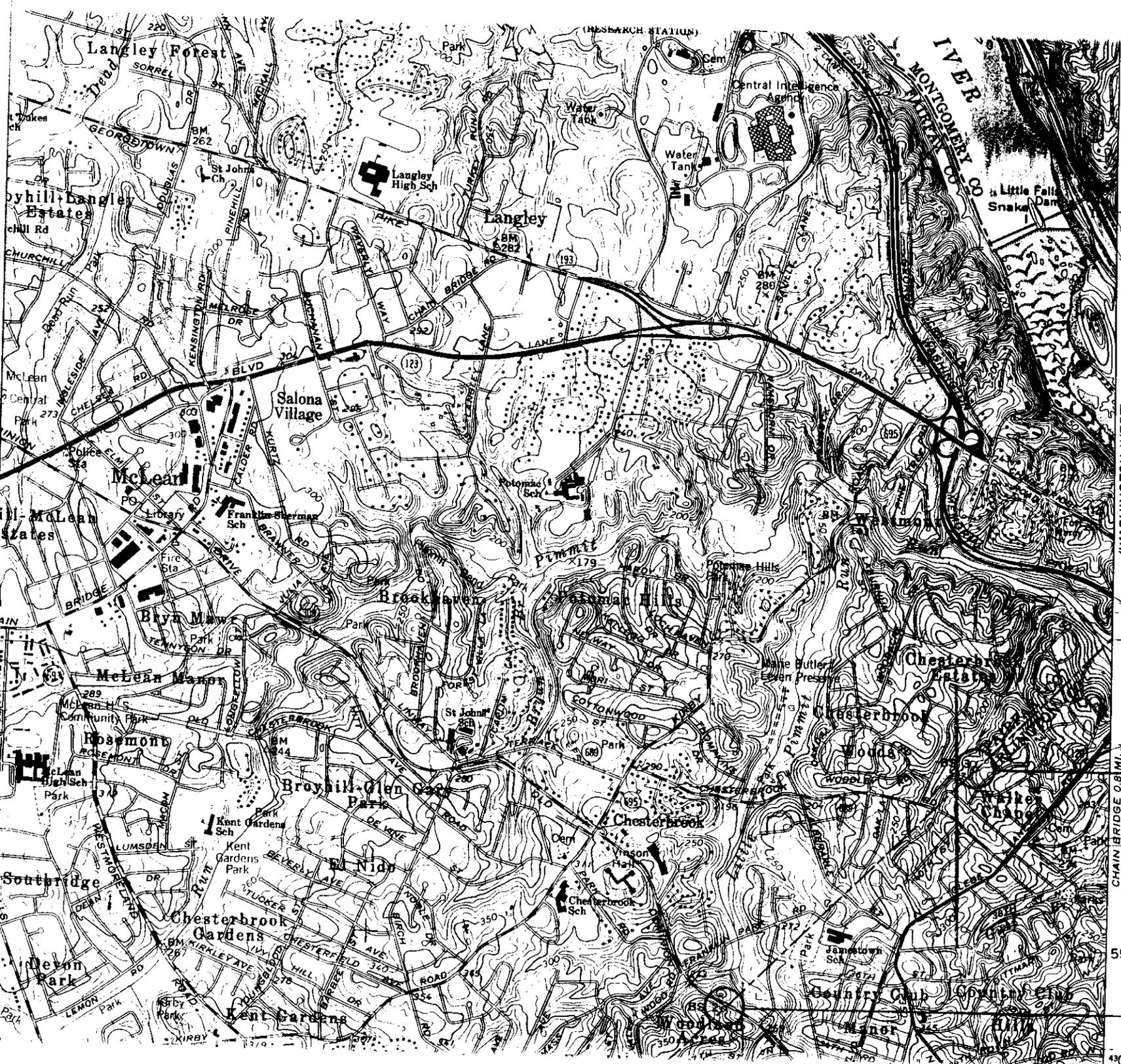
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Finally, the continuing efforts for the preservation of the stones, through work begun in 1915 by the Daughters of the American Revolution, is an important chapter in the historic preservation in the national capital area.

The enduring importance of the boundary stones is reflected in their appearance on the United States Geological Survey maps of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Northern Virginia.



D. C. LINE 0.9 MI.

(WASHINGTON WEST) 3.561 MI.

KEY BRIDGE 3.9 MI.

CHAIN BRIDGE 0.8 MI.

55'

BOUNDARY  
MARKERS OF THE  
ORIGINAL DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA

NW3  
UTM  
18|315080|4310370

NW2  
UTM  
18|313920|4309180

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All fourteen stones are regarded as contributing to the importance of the group, as are the fences erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution since 1915 to protect them. The fences also vary in their condition.

### ENDNOTES

1. June Robinson, "The Arlington Boundary Stones," Arlington Historical Magazine, (October 1989): 16.
2. Fred E. Woodward, "A Ramble Along the Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia with A Camera," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 10 (1907): 67.
3. Louise Coflin Chase, "Boundary Stones of the District of Columbia," Manuscript on file, Washingtonian Collection, District of Columbia Public Library, (1930).
4. Edwin Darby Nye, "Revisiting Washington's Forty Boundary Stones, 1972," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 48 (1973): 743.
5. Mark J. Terman, "The 'Jurisdiction Stones' and Cornerstone Park," Manuscript on file, Virginia Collection, Falls Church Public Library, (1972): 41.